(b) India's export during April-January, 1994-95, the latest period for which such data are available were valued at US $ 20871 million (Rs. 65483 crores) indicating a growth rate of 17.3 per cent.

(c) Export promotion is a continuous process and steps are taken to boost exports in consultation with trade and industry. New bilateral framework agreements on trade and economic cooperation are being signed with the emergent countries of the former Soviet Union and East Europe and rupee payment track is being substituted by standard hard currency agreements. Exports to Russia are being facilitated through debt repayment mechanism.

National strategy on exports

875. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are in the process of evolving a national strategy on exports which would involve engaging a much larger percentage of the population in exports; and

(b) if so, what is the status of the formulation of such a strategy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) The Export and Import policy contains the basic strategy on exports. There is broad consensus on the policy. With the establishment of a larger number of units in the EPZs, a larger number of export-oriented units and the participation of a larger number of merchants/manufacturers in exporting goods produced in India, a larger proportion of the population will be involved in the export drive. Changes in Trade policy are made from time to time in response to changes in the international and national economic situations. Active involvement of the State Governments in export promotion efforts would also lead to larger people's participation.

Setback to prawn exports

876. SHRI P. UPENDRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether exports of prawn from India have suffered a setback recently due disease in aqua-farm; and

(b) what steps Government is taking to remedy this situation and maintain the exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Export of prawns in the period (April-January) 1994-1995 increased by 33.66 per cent in value terms as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. There has however, been some loss of production owing to outbreak of disease in the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh and in some pockets of Tamilnadu.

(b) The remedial measures contemplated inter-alia include:

(I) Regulation through legislation of prawn farming by the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

(II) Advising prawn farmers to have a crop holiday up to end of May 1995 and dry the pond bottom for 2-3 months.

(III) Incorporation of an Environmental Management and Monitoring Plan.

(IV) Advising farmers to adopt environmental management systems.

Gearing up export machinery to maximise exports

877. SHRI HIPHEI:

MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any steps have been taken to gear up the export machinery to maximise exports in 1994-95;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether suggestions have also been invited to make changes in the existing export-import poilcy of the country;

(d) whether any suggestions have been received so far;

(e) whether Government propose to take action on these suggestions; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) A number of steps were taken in the revised Export and Import Policy on 30th March, 1994 to simplify the policy and procedures. Other steps taken to gear up the export machinery include, inter. alia, green channel facility for exporters, facilitating export linked imports through Duty Exemption and EPCG Schemes, designating Nodal officers responsible for export promotion in various Departments, close interaction ith Apex Bodies, Chambers, associations and other exporting community besides activating the OGFT Organisation as export faciliator.

(c) to (f) Suggestions have been received from various cuarters which are under review. All suggestions towards Policy/ procedural simplifications will be taken into account while framing the revised Exim Policy Procedure.

U.S. proposal to boost trade ties with India

878. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that U.S.A. proposes to boost trade ties with India, and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) India has been identified as one of the Big Emerging Markets by USA. In January' 1995, Mr. Ronald H. Brown, US Commerce Secretary visited India on a Presidential Business Deveopment Mission alongwith Chief Executive Officers of a number of large US Companies. An MOU for setting up of Indo-US Commercial Alliance has also been signed. These efforts are expected to lead to stronger trade and commercial ties.

Hampering of Swiss Investment due to High tariffs

879. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem in 'The Statesman', dated 7th February, 1995 captioned "High tariffs hampering Swiss investment in India".

(b) if so, whether the President of the Swiss Federation of Commerce and Industry have pointed out several discrepancies and hurdles in the way of implementing Indo-Swiss trade agreements;

(c) if so, whether Government have taken any serious efforts to boost Indo-Swiss agreements; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. It has been reported in the Press that the President of the Swiss Feredation for Commerce and Industry touched upon certain difficulties in the export from Switzerland of textiles, watches and some items of food processing industries on account of India's import policy and high tariffs.

(c) and (d) It is Government's constant endavour to expand bilateral economic ties with all its partners including Switzerland. Government has been effecting a gradual reduction in tariffs. Trade Policy changes are part of an on-going exercise.

Steps to boost export of tea

880. SHRI KRISHAN KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to take serious steps to boost export of tea in order to save the Tea Industry from collapse;